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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a theoretical framework for understanding girls' experiences of schooling in contemporary Australia, and explores some of the ways in which education perpetuates women's lack of citizenship status. Equality-directed curriculum reforms require of girls that they attempt to transpose themselves from private realm status to a position as the equals of males in the public realm of the school. In this process, girls' status is defined as the "other" in relation to males in various ways which frequently define girls physically or sexually in terms of their bodies. The experiential space that is thus created has been named "Transpositional mediating space." Within this mediating space, girls are reminded with varying degrees of force, of the sexual contract, of their status as sexual property. This paper explores the barriers faced by young Australian women as they attempt to educate themselves and become upwardly mobile. The relationships of women's attempts to gain equal entry to male terrain and the prohibition exercised against these attempts are described. The paper focuses on the detrimental effects that a gender biased curriculum has on the physical and emotional well-being of Australian women as they attempt to better themselves through education. These effects are manifested through the women's reluctance in reporting cases of sexual violence, sexual harassment, family violence and sexual exploitation. (SR)

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Schooling for Citizenship:
A site of desire and threat for girls

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Stinking dull work, the labour of sheilas at best, with all that smile and how do you do, sir, but you had to admire them for it.

("sheila" is a colloquial Australian term for "woman".)

Tim Winton, *Cloudstreet*, 1991:76.

It is taken to be a truism that education is, or should be, in part a preparation for citizenship, directed towards active and successful participation by all students in a modern democratic society. However, despite the clear evidence of widely disparate outcomes from women's and men's education across western industrialised nations (O.E.C.D., 1986), the gendered nature of citizenship as both a philosophical and social educational goal has received little attention from educational theorists. Furthermore, little is known of girls' and women's lived experiences of the gendered curriculum of schooling. This paper offers a theoretical framework for understanding girls' experiences of schooling in contemporary Australia, and explores some of the ways in which education perpetuates women's lack of citizenship status.

Carole Pateman (1989:14) has argued forcefully that women, *as women*, cannot meet the criteria for citizenship. Elaborating this point she observes that

> democratic theorists have not yet confronted the implications of the patriarchal construction of citizenship and so they provide little or no help in elucidating or solving the complex dilemma facing women ... within the contemporary patriarchal order, and within the confines of the ostensibly universal categories of democratic theory; it is taken for granted that for women to be active, full citizens they must become (like) men ... although women have demanded for two centuries that their distinctive qualities and tasks should become part of citizenship - that is, that they should be citizens as women - their demand cannot be met when it is precisely these marks of womanhood that place women in opposition to, or, at best, in a paradoxical and contradictory relation to, citizenship. Women are expected to don the lion's skin, mane and all, ... there is no set of clothes available for a citizen who is a woman.

From a similar perspective, Jane Roland Martin (1981) has argued that the philosophical ideal of the educated person still does not include women and girls. This fundamental philosophical point remains inadequately operationalised in terms of the curriculum and pedagogy of schooling, and consequent student experience. In Australia, attempts to achieve greater educational equality for girls have centred on positioning girls within a deficit framework, as lacking in relation to male norms of the educated person, and encouraging them to measure up to those norms (Foster, 1992). The results of what is in effect a behaviourist approach to sexual equality are starting to become apparent and will be discussed in this paper. Less apparent are the implications for conceptions of citizenship as an educational objective.

Schools are sites of both gendered experiences and of sexual politics, of which the widespread sex-based harassment of girls in Australia is an example. In addition, however, equality-directed curriculum reforms require of girls that they attempt to transpose themselves from private realm status to a position as the equals of males in the public realm of the school. In this process, girls' status is defined and redefined as the "other" in relation to males, in various ways which frequently define girls physically or sexually in terms of their bodies, and constitute reminders of difference. I have given the experiential space that is thus created the name, *transpositional mediating space*. Girls' experiences of this transposition are circumscribed, formed and reformed within this mediating space, in which girls and women are reminded, with varying degrees of force, of the sexual contract, of their status as sexual property. Australian research has shown that girls have a keen knowledge and understanding of the dictates and proscriptions of the sexual contract (*Listening to Girls*, 1992). Phenomenological theory is especially useful in showing how girls' subjective experiences interconnect dialectically with the objective realities of the operation of the sexual contract within schooling, making the lived curriculum of schools a complex site of both threat and desire for girls.

A spectrum of prohibition

Women's and girls' subjective experiences of this space (TMS) are significantly determined by the objective material reality of a spectrum of prohibition constraining their movement away from private realm status, or what is here referred to as "women's place": the sphere of the personal, the domestic and intimate, so-called "private life", of care and nurturance of others, characterised by unpaid and undervalued work. That which is proscribed to women refers to those areas of civil or public life which attract high financial rewards, entail supervision of men, or are especially prestigious. These areas usually involve paid employment, and the training for it. There is a close correlation between the prestige and power ascribed to certain employment areas, and the degree of prohibition women experience attempting to entering them, for example, male-dominated trades and government and politics.

The barriers women encounter when they attempt to move beyond their "place", suggest clearly that such a move is in fact prohibited at profound psychic, structural and institutional levels of society. Prohibition occurs across a range of experiences, encompassing male employment bastions, to the area of sexuality, for example, the prohibition on women's refusing sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, and sexual violence (Lewis, 1990). Lewis describes the mass shooting of fourteen women engineering students at the University of Montreal in 1989, which occurred in a context of women on the campus mounting a campaign to stop date rape. This latter area of the refusal of sexual harassment and violence is one of the most problematic for women.

It is hardly surprising then, that Australian Bureau of Crime Statistics show that women's reporting of rape did not increase in the decade from 1983 to 1993, despite the efforts of the Bureau and many other organisations to encourage the reporting of rape.

Women surveyed in the Australian study, "A woman's view" (1992) believed strongly that violence, in particular domestic violence, was the price to be paid for changes in their status in society towards greater equality. Stuart Rees (1992:4) points out that the use of the term, "domestic", has implied that in law, men could enjoy autonomy in relation to other members of their household. This has meant that although domestic violence is widespread, privacy and the reluctance to report this behaviour has made it difficult to address these issues as a matter of public priority. The violence that women experience in, or associated with, the public sphere such as the workplace is not, however, a form of domestic violence carried into the public sphere. Public sphere, institutionalised violence can be distinguished from private sphere, domestic violence (Rees, 1992:7). Clearly, though, there are parallels between forms of violence in the public and private spheres. Attitudes to women which characterise the private sphere are doubtless transferred to the public sphere. There is also a reflexivity between public and private realms, as suggested in Elshtain's (1981) terms, "public man, private woman". The idea and the concrete reality of public woman violates public-private norms, requiring women to give up the (dubious) protection of the private sphere, and expose themselves to the threat of violence in the public sphere. For girls to take up the promises of reforms towards equality in education, in their present form, entails the threat of violence in one form or another.

Women are keenly aware that a woman who transposes herself wholeheartedly, or is transposed, from the private to the public sphere, is an anomaly. Similarly, girls in schools are aware that feminist slogans such as "Girls can do anything" and "Give a girl a spanner" entail the risk of male hostility. And recently, the increasingly common disavowal by young women of any allegiance to feminism has been evident, presumably because feminism constitutes a threat to their perceived security in both public and private sphere situations.

Interestingly, neo-liberal reforms in Australia have largely been expressed in terms of the removal of overt barriers prohibiting girls' equal participation in masculine[3] curriculum areas, such as encouraging girls into maths and science classes. A preferred approach to changes in curriculum and pedagogy would be a methodology which is more caring and respectful of girls than simplistically to suggest that now there are no barriers. Such a methodology would assist girls firstly, to identify and understand the operation of prohibitions in women's social and educational lives; secondly, to examine the ways in which those prohibitions may be reflected in their own thinking and emotions; and thirdly, to experience a sense of agency through giving voice to their diffidence and fears, as well as their desires and hopes.

The boundaries of the TMS

The Montreal massacre may be viewed by some as an isolated, aberrant act of violence. It is, however, an incident at the extreme end of a continuum of prohibition against the equal entry of women to male terrain. As Magda Lewis (1990:468) points out, it could have happened on any Canadian or North American campus. In the context of patriarchal societies in which violence against women is condoned, this kind of event could happen anywhere. It appears, however, that

there may be an indicative relationship between the perceived relative masculinity of a domain into which women are being transposed (in this case, engineering education and training, which in Australia has the lowest tertiary female enrolment), and the extremity of the prohibitive action applied to keep women out. This means that the greater the degree of overt masculinisation of an area of activity, the more overtly and tangibly violent may be the actions against women seeking entry, as in the case of the Montreal massacre. However, as Rees (1992:7) points out, the institutionalised violence of contemporary public policy is no less potent in its effects, exemplified by women's lack of power in government decision-making in Australia, sustained by trivialising and demeaning attitudes towards women, on the part of some male parliamentarians. And in Australia, wife-battering is widespread.

TMS describes the relationship of women's attempts to gain equal entry to male terrain, and the prohibition exercised against these attempts. From a phenomenological perspective, TMS embraces an intermingling of both tangible encounters and experiences, and emotional, psychological and intellectual experiences. Perhaps the most profound consequence of TMS, however, occurs at the epistemological level. This concerns the implications of women's and girls' experiences in the TMS for issues of knowledge, curriculum change.

Pateman has pointed out (1988:11), that women are paradoxically incorporated into a sphere that both is, and is not, in civil society. This paradox is a direct outcome of men's and women's very different relationships to public and private life. The relationship of males and females to the TMS is asymmetrical in nature. On the one hand, it is relatively straightforward for males to cross over into the female/private domain and in fact, men exercise this choice at will, often enjoying preferential treatment in female-dominated occupations, what Williams (1989) refers to as a "glass escalator". Men are also generally encouraged by women, but not necessarily other men, to take a more active role in domestic and intimate life, and are praised by women when they do so. On the other hand, the experiential dimension of women's attempts to make incursions into the public world of paradigmatic masculinity is not at all straightforward and is problematic for women themselves.

Thematic dimensions of the transpositional mediating space

TMS is an analytic construct to concretise and explore girls' experiences of schooling, and to give them a place. This construct has several themes or dimensions, which include both normative and behavioural aspects, and are reinforced by ideological and symbolic structures of power, and relations of ruling which alienate women and their experience (Smith, 1990). I will briefly discuss three of these themes before elaborating on the central theme, schooling as a site of desire and threat for girls. The first theme relates to a woman's place.

A Woman's Place

The ideology and boundaries surrounding a woman's place, and her appropriate roles and activities, have proved to be even more resistant to change than the preserves of men. Certainly a small handful of "token" women can be found in business and middle management positions, for example (Still, Guerin and Chia, 1992), and in most professions and occupations. Women in those positions are tokens of neo-liberal equal opportunity, who have succeeded in a male domain. However, their position usually has symbolic value only, in that they can be used to assuage accusations of discrimination. Being in a tiny minority, it is difficult for such women to intervene in the masculine culture of the workplace (Cockburn 1991; Ferguson, 1984).

As has already been pointed out, in Australia there has been no increase in the number of women in government, in the judiciary, and the Anglican Church has fiercely opposed the ordination of women as priests. In the field of education, there has actually been a *decline* in the number of female university academic staff above senior lecturer from 13.2% in 1988 to 9.8% in 1991, and at the level of senior lecturer and below, increases in the number of women have been minimal, between 3% and 6% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1993:107).

In relation to school teaching, unlike occupations such as engineering and nursing, women and men are more equally represented as workers, and indeed, school teaching is frequently referred to as a "female-dominated" profession. However, this apparent equality masks considerable variation in employment between education sectors and between levels within sectors. In 1991, women comprised 74% of teachers and specialist support staff in primary schools and 51% in secondary schools. However, in higher education institutions, women occupied only 31% of academic positions overall, and as noted above, in declining numbers above senior lecturer (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1993:105). Although women represented 65% of all government school staff, they comprised only 22% of executive staff. Moreover, women occupied almost nine times as many specialist support, administrative and clerical positions in schools as men (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1993:106).

Teaching is gendered feminine, in the sense that the occupation of teaching children is seen as women's work, while on the other hand, the administration of education and leadership in education is men's work (Durie Saines, 1991; Pearson, Shavlik and Touchton, 1989; Randell, 1990). The conflation of teaching with femininity is evoked in metaphors of the maternal/sexual by Madeleine Grumet in her book, *Bitter milk: women and teaching* (1988) and by Jane Gallop in a recent paper, "The teacher's breasts" (1993). This association of teaching with femininity is described by Randell (1990:5) as constituting:

> an overwhelmingly genderised hierarchy in institutions, (which) ranks maleness highly and denigrates femaleness, particularly in universities where the "handmaiden image" of both academic and general women staff is broken only by the appointment of occasional, exceptionally well qualified women

The *handmaiden* imperative is invoked in various ways at all levels of education. It is expressed in school classrooms in a demand for female students and teachers to be caretakers of the learning environment. For example, girls are often expected

to play a moderating and calming role in coeducational classrooms, socialising boys and helping them if necessary. It is not known to what extent this role hampers girls' ability to engage the curriculum fully, and to actively pursue their own learning goals. A recent expression in Australia has been the clear message to girls that they should protect boys' self-images by not threatening them by beating them at subjects such as maths and science. I'll elaborate on this later.

This phenomenon, and the consequently contradictory positioning of women and girls vis-a-vis education's goals relating to citizenship, has received little theoretical attention, An exception is Martin's (1989) analysis of the contradictory notion of the educated woman. Even less discussed are the penalties which result for women when the handmaiden imperative is flouted. In some positions, especially senior ones, merely being a woman is enough to attract extremely punitive attention.

The reason most often cited in Australian government reports and in the media, for women's lack of occupational advancement is the burden of their domestic responsibilities (*Half Way to Equal*). Research in this area supports this reasoning and demonstrates that there has been no significant increase in men's participation in childcare and household work. The conclusion is often drawn that this lack of participation by men is the major reason for women's lack of advancement in the paid workforce, particularly in the strongly male-identified echelons.

It is clear that the general unwillingness of men to participate equally in domestic work (what Jane Roland Martin refers to as "domephobia") is a very significant factor in the lives of those "superwomen" carrying dual responsibilities. Indeed, Australian research has shown (Bittman, 1991) that women's domestic workload is increased rather than decreased by the presence of a male partner. Nevertheless, although there is a very strong nexus between the sexual division of labour in both paid and unpaid work, that nexus is not the only factor circumscribing women's lives, as is often suggested. It should be pointed out that not all women have heavy domestic burdens, and that many women use the services of paid childcare and cleaning.

Women's responsibility for unpaid domestic work and childcare is fundamental to TMS, especially viewed from a marxist economic perspective. However, the critical aspect of the notion of a woman's place concerns *caretaking*. Although there has been a blurring of the public-private distinction, the contemporary imperative for women to take primary responsibility for caring work, which I refer to as "caretaking" is the direct product of the public-private distinction.

In the present historical period, the pressures exerted on women to fulfil caretaking functions, and the penalties when they do not, are severe. The few women who do enter male occupational bastions are often depicted as not being real women because they are seen to abdicate their caring responsibilities, or else they or someone else, such as the media, are at pains to establish that they are "normal women" in this regard.

This theme is a very powerful, yet unacknowledged, force curtailing girls' equality in education, and I'd like to give an example of the experiences of the first girls to enter an all-male agricultural high school in Australia. I was a consultant in the

school's transition to coeducation which was the subject of research by a team from Charles Sturt University. The research revealed on the part of the girls an enormous degree of "worry" and concern about fitting in, and possibly ruining the school's male traditions and generally upsetting the status quo. In addition, the older, sixteen year old girls were spending a great deal of time counselling and caring for distressed younger girls, and concentrating on forming good relationships with their male peers, on the latters' terms. The girls acknowledged that their schoolwork was suffering as a result, but although this was seen as a serious consequence, it was of less concern than the complex network of relationships and interpersonal issues which were occupying the girls' time and attention. The boys, on the other hand, were primarily concerned with the immediate effect of the girls' presence on their own lives, an effect which on balance was judged as positive, since the boys were aware of the benefits of improved relationships. It hadn't occurred to the boys to wonder whether the coeducation process was benefiting the girls equally, or indeed, how it was affecting them at all.

The following is an extract from a transcript of my interview with the older girls held on 31 March 1993.

Q: How do you feel about coming into a male establishment?
A: Proud ... Me too ... but also a bit worried that we'll ruin a few of their traditions because they've got the *best* traditions and they've got so many of them and we don't want to do anything to upset them ... It's just little things we don't want to change.

Q: Are you really worrying about that a lot? All of you?
A: Yeah, we do.

Q: All of you?
A: Yeah ... all ... yeah. It's just the problem is we're female, that's the only problem.

Q: Why is that a problem?
A: You can't exactly join in with some of their more ludicrous adventures ... running up and down porches ... dropping towels.

Q: Do they do that stuff?
A: Not very often ... occasionally ... they're used to it. Sometimes they just forget. You're coming into a school that used to be all boys for 70 years and now you're sort of changing everything.

Q: Has anyone said to you you have a perfect right to be here?
A: No ... Mr Roberts probably. A lot of them said they like it, but a lot of them haven't said anything at all, they haven't said anything, just given a few scowls in our direction.

Q: Have they?
A: They're all old boys ... that might be a personal thing.

Q: So you feel there's some resentment of you being here?
A: Yeah, we've broken the tradition of only boys coming here, now there's girls as well ... so ... Quite a lot of the teachers are pretty good about it—only one or two come across like they don't like the idea.

Q: Do you know why girls are at Yanco?
A: The government said they had to.

Q: I'd like to explore this idea of worrying about spoiling their traditions. Where did you get that idea?
A: You hear so much about the traditions of Yanco that you worry, they're so well known. Are these things going to keep on going 'cos there's girls here or are they just gonna stop? You don't feel like you can fit in very much. They're telling you all the things that have happened with all the boys. You feel different because it's all the boys and nothing to do with girls yet. I suppose the girls coming later mightn't feel so bad.

Q: So you feel the reference point is all about boys, not girls?
A: All the things the guys have done ... the great footy team ... great cricket.

Q: What are *your* traditions?
A: We haven't got any yet ... we'll get thrashed by Leeton High.

Q: Are there any traditions apart from sport?
A: Oh ... academic ... the girls fit in pretty well academically.

Sadly, the girls' caretaking function has since been replaced by the pressure placed on them to be sexually available to the older boys, with many sexually active.

The second theme further develops the idea of women's place, specifically applied to the classroom setting, where women are required to be caretakers of males, and of masculinity.

Caretaking in the classroom: What about the boys!

The phenomenon of girls as caretakers of boys in the classroom, has not received any extended, formal discussion in Australian education policy. As I mentioned, girls are expected to exercise a calming and moderating influence on boys' disruptive behaviour in coeducational classrooms and schools (as reported, for example, in *Listening to Girls,* 1992:18). Virtually no attention has been directed in Australia to the constraints this responsibility imposes on girls, or to the penalties to their learning, and it remains an unacknowledged dynamic of coeducational learning environments. Magda Lewis (1990), however, discusses this dynamic in relation to the university classroom setting. In my view, it is one of the most powerful, albeit subtle, determinants of girls' day-to-day schooling experience. It is powerful because of its location in the public-private nexus, and specifically, as part of the unspoken sexual contract whereby the patriarchal meaning of femininity entails the provision of service, sexual and otherwise, to men (Pateman, 1988:126). Within the sexual contract, the functions of caring, nurturance and emotional support are seen as women's functions. Women, as Benhabib (1987:95) puts it, are the "housekeepers of the emotions". Men may carry out these functions but they are valued differentially according to whether they are done by men or women. Regrettably, curriculum reform in Australia has neglected an examination of the public-private dialectic in the curriculum, either in terms of curriculum content areas, or in the curriculum as it is lived by female and male students.

In my earlier example, girls were automatically expected to take care of the younger girls, and of the boys' experience of the coeducational experience, responsibilities which might reasonably be expected to be assumed by the staff, and by the boys who might have played a more welcoming and facilitating role. However, the boys' needs were taken, by male and female students alike, to be of

prior importance. The unacknowledged injunction placed upon girls to be *caretakers* of the learning environment, as well as persons in it, is one of the most crucial components of TMS, and girls' experiences in TMS. However, it also has a further *normative* sense which results in adverse consequences for girls and women when the norm is flouted. Furthermore, the equality discourse in girls' education produces what I will go on to describe as *desire* for equality which is tantamount to a flouting of the caretaking norm.

Lewis (1990:474) concludes from her study of classroom interaction in the mixed sex university classroom that "the classroom remains a site that supports only practices that construct women's social acceptability as caretakers of men". Lewis illustrates this observation by describing the concern and discomfort expressed by her female students about how male students experience and feel about feminist content in the classroom. She also notes that this concern is felt by women even in the absence of men in the classroom. She explains this tendency to give greater importance to male experience than female experience *within patriarchy* , citing Jaggar's (1983:151) formulation of Gramsci's notion of hegemony, a concept

> designed to explain how a dominant class maintains control by projecting its own particular way of seeing social reality so successfully that its view is accepted as common sense and as part of the natural order by those who in fact are subordinated to it.

Gramsci's notion of a hegemonic social reality is consistent with a phenomenological interpretation of how it is that the power and privilege associated with masculinity is perpetuated as a subjective world view, individually and collectively. Male power and privilege is given the status of reality, which is projected onto the objective world. It is important to emphasise the significance of the relationship between the subjective and objective components of masculinity as a hegemonic world view. It is also important to emphasise, as Jaggar (1992:159) does, the emotional components of hegemony whereby ideological standards and values are absorbed emotionally as well as mentally.

Mentally and emotionally, male power and privilege are taken to be both subjective and objective reality. This explains why, despite a wealth of documented Australian evidence of girls' subordinate status to that of boys in education, the interests of males nevertheless continue to be of prior importance to those of females.

This has been dramatically demonstrated in Australia over the past year by a media-led campaign spearheaded by a handful of men, which incorrectly asserted that girls are now beating boys at maths and science. The possibility that girls might be outstripping boys on their own terrain was one which could not be tolerated and quickly led to a parliamentary enquiry (which had never been instigated to address the inequalities evident in girls' education), a widespread push for a "Boys Education Strategy", and a plethora of programs to address boys' educational disadvantage and help them to regain their supremacy in the high-status curriculum areas. By contrast, boys' lesser skills in, for example, the care of children and domestic work, have never been identified as a problem for themselves or women.

These discussions of boys and their education have been atheoretical, ignoring the social and educational context of gendered power relations. Instead, they have rested on the shaky ground of presumptive equality, having three different but interrelated claims (Foster, 1994b). These are first, the presumption that equality for women and girls has been achieved; second, the presumption that men and women are equal in the sense of being equivalent, symmetrical populations, having different but equal problems; and third, the presumption that men and boys are equally disadvantaged in society and schooling as women and girls. As in the United States, the third claim has been enthusiastically embraced by men disaffected with feminism, who then turned their attention to education.

The construction of boys' advantage in education as disadvantage is a rhetorical twist which increasingly has been used to great effect. Much of this rhetoric originated with health workers and psychologists who argued spuriously that inadequacies in boys' schooling were the cause of what has become a familiar catalogue of problems: head injuries, suicides, male violence and so on. These arguments were applied to education. The Parliamentary Draft Report asserted (p.15) that "many boys have low self-esteem", although there is no research or other evidence to support this claim.

This rhetorical process is described by Connell (1994a:2) thus:

> In places where feminist work has created women's studies programs or affirmative action programs (e.g. encouraging girls into science and mathematics), the idea that it is "boys' turn" for attention and resources is easily spread. This can be reinforced by calling attention to ways in which boys are less successful in schooling than girls: for instance in regard to reading and in higher dropout rates. Combined with statistics about men's earlier death, men's greater rates of injury by violence etc., this can be worked up into a claim that men are the truly disadvantaged group.

Connell (1994b:2) describes the context which makes this notion possible as "masculinity therapy":

> the most conspicuous form of gender politics among men at present. It represents a dramatic shift towards the political right, and mostly ignores the social context and economic inequality, and totally ignores the international context, to focus on the emotional problems of men. It is, at bottom, a psychological "recovery" movement, addressed to the pain that heterosexual men feel and their uncertainties about gender. (They) are mostly white, middle class, and often middle aged. They feel they are in trouble, and they feel they are unfairly blamed by feminists. Some of their theorists, in fact, claim that men are more disadvantaged than women, and all of them say it is men's turn for the attention feminism has been getting for the problems of women. The practical effect is to turn heterosexual men inward to their own troubles, and withdraw energy from social change. It offers absolution from the guilt that feminism still arouses among men, and a kind of "separate sphere" in which men can pursue their own project of change.

This particular claim, of males as equal victims, has had a strongly emotive appeal for mothers concerned about their sons. Policies and programs have reverberated to the refrain, What *about the boys!* effectively achieving a swift reassertion of male educational interests as prior, in the face of girls' perceived advances into male

terrain. By contrast, male interests had earlier been strongly bolstered by a construction which emphasised girls as *lacking*, rather than viewing boys themselves as being *advantaged*.

The curriculum and practices of schooling maintain a social reality which endorses the injunction that women should be the providers of care. The pervasiveness of this social reality means that a perceived conflict with the rights and interests of men is created in any educational setting, which seems to advocate in a major way, the needs and interests of women. As Lewis (1990) points out, this conflict is often keenly felt by women themselves, and it has been a significant aspect of the *What about the boys!* campaign in Australia. This has resulted in a recasting of the issues concerning gender in education, primarily in terms of resources and benefits: too many are going to girls at the expense of boys, who are constructed as equally the victims of patriarchy as girls. This construction has succeeded despite the well-documented comparative positions of boys and girls in schools, including matters of differential resourcing, in terms of teacher time and attention, physical space, and equipment and facilities.

It is, however, the unexpressed subtext of the *what about the boys!* refrain which is important, and relates directly to the expectation that women will be caretakers of men. In this subtext, notions of equality for girls entail taking something very crucial away from boys. What is seen to be taken from boys is their supremacy as learners, as well as the caretaking resources of women and girls, to which boys are assumed to be entitled.

An unspoken question is, what would happen to boys if girls do become boys' equals and stop being their caretakers? Interestingly, during this backlash period in Australia, there has been no acknowledgment that girls' equal or better achievement in male-dominated subjects would actually be beneficial for boys in that it would give them an opportunity to see girls in a new, healthier light as peers and equals. This issue raises one of the most profound aspects of TMS: that girls' and boys' schooling experiences are situated in what Alison Griffith and Dorothy Smith (1987:96) refer to as a *mothering discourse*. This discourse, they suggest, operates according to a "paradigm of the ideal mother", which can be traced back to Rousseau's prescriptions for Sophie's primary function as Emile's helpmate and nurturer in *Emile*.

For girls, this paradigm is expressed in a constellation of required activities, for example, moderating the behaviour of boys, softening the classroom atmosphere, being "good girls", and not exhibiting the kinds of undisciplined behaviours which are taken to be "natural" for boys and which often gain sympathetic attention for boys. By contrast, there is no similar expectation for boys to be carers or nurturers. Indeed, it seems that boys and girls are involved in two quite different projects in education, in relation to issues of care and caretaking. For instance, it is current wisdom in Australia that a measure of girls' attainment of equality is their greater participation in leadership and positions of responsibility in schools. While boys see this kind of work as simply unnecessary as a qualification for what Richard Teese calls "the male career trajectory", this extra work is not paying off for girls post-school. It could be said that schooling proceeds from a male

standpoint of meaning, in which one of schooling's primary functions is the care and nurturance of boys, by female teachers and students alike.

The injunction placed upon women to take responsibility for males in the classroom can be seen on one level to be a transfer of the practices of the private, domestic sphere into the public setting of the school's learning situation, the classroom. Specifically, "private" imperatives relating to women's perceived primary functions in the areas of sexuality, motherhood and caretaking are brought into the micro-public domain of the school. On another level, however, the injunction can also be seen to be a particular feature of educational settings. At this second level, there is a profound sense in which despite the discourse of educational equality, it is still widely believed that boys' interests and their learning are of prior importance to girls'. Lewis (1990) makes the point that the pressure on women to take care of men in the classroom increases the more challenging the content becomes, for example, involving feminist theory.

There are many examples of the greater importance placed on boys' learning and associated problems, exemplified by the many studies showing the greater amount of teacher time devoted to boys, the attention given to boys' learning difficulties and discipline problems, the greater amount of physical space and school sporting facilities used by boys, and boys' domination of technical and computer equipment. In New South Wales up to 90% of specialist education resources currently go to boys. These barriers to girls' equal status in education have been repeatedly documented in Australia since the 1975 Report, *Girls, School and Society*.

These barriers are outcomes of deeply held and largely unexamined assumptions about the relationship of women to education, assumptions which are endemic in educational philosophy and schooling practices. They lead easily to the expectation that girls are responsible for making the learning environment a positive one for boys, rather than making that environment work for themselves. An especially clear example of this expectation in practice is that of the coeducation debate in Australia, where it has emerged clearly that it is expected by both boys and girls that girls should perform a function in the classroom quite distinct from that of learners. This has been variously described as "socialising" boys, providing a civilising atmosphere and helping boys with learning problems. It is not surprising then that boys prefer co-education and feel that their capacity to learn is enhanced by the presence of girls (Regan, 1993). On the other hand, many girls both prefer and perform better in single-sex classrooms, a finding which amazingly has so far not been investigated in Australia.

It is because of the priority placed on boys' learning that little serious attention has been given to the fact that the climate of the coeducational school is a negative and hostile one for many girls, characterised by endemic sexual harassment, and that girls' learning very likely suffers in coeducational classrooms (*Listening to Girls* 1992), and conversely, is enhanced in girls-only learning situations (Regan, 1993; Quality Assurance Review, 1994). Great importance has been placed on the "social benefits" of co-education, largely related to the school's perceived function of preparing students for the "realities" of a co-educational, that is, gendered society, rather than how the educational interests of girls would best be served,

exemplified in the following statement by educational psychologist, Herbert Marsh, (*Sydney Morning Herald* 22/2/1994):

> My own feeling is that when people grow up, they need to live in a co-educational world and the best way for getting training for that is by going to a co-educational school. Many of the difficulties people may face with the opposite sex can be best addressed by getting along in a *nice safe environment of a co-educational school* (my emphasis).

These "social benefits" and "realities" of the coeducational school setting are, however, conflated with the injunction on women to take care of and nurture the interests of others, in particular those of males, to the exclusion of important educational arguments.

The caretaking injunction placed on girls becomes intensified and more threatening the more strongly sexually delineated the particular learning context. For example, girls in home economics classes are usually expected to help boys to pick up unfamiliar skills. No such expectation is made of boys in technical classes, where girls frequently report harassment which results in their discontinuing the subject. In the instance of the massacre of the engineering students, the conjunction of women as students in such a strongly defined masculine area with women's withdrawal of sexual (and presumably other) favours through the "No means no" campaign was intolerable for the male student, and justified his extreme violence. It is evident that women's withdrawal of caretaking provokes extreme hostility generally, and it is likely that the so-called "battle of the sexes" really describes women's attempts to withdraw some of that caretaking in the interests of greater equality, and enhancing their own life situations.

It is through fear of provoking hostility and violence that women engage in a great deal of *negotiation* and *accommodation*, and this is the third theme of the TMS which I will now discuss.

Negotiation and accommodation

Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (1992: xix) argue that gender relations in Australia

> is a study of both domination and negotiation, and that (women) at times have accommodated themselves within prescribed domestic boundaries, seemingly accepting and enduring their lot.

"Superwomen" (*Halfway to Equal*, 1992:45), who are women "working on all fronts", accommodate the split between private and public life, and men's general unwillingness to share equally in domestic, personal life.

Women and girls are well aware that males and females "negotiate upon unequal terrain for social privileges, opportunities and resources" (Saunders and Evans, 1992: xx). Girls know that the ostensibly public space of the school is not equally shared by boys with girls. Girls accommodate boys' domination of the physical, especially teaching and learning, spaces of the school in various ways (Foley, 1993; LTG, 1992). A few girls act out, and as a consequence, are labelled as

troublemakers and resisters, often in sexually explicit terms (Samuel, 1983). In relation to sex-based harassment, which many boys regard as natural and normal, *Listening to Girls* (1992:5) states that in the cases of the majority of girls,

> Girls accommodate this harassment differently. Some react with hostility and anger, but it causes many to be passive and docile, restricts their access to space, equipment and attention of the teachers, and undermines their feelings of safety, self-confidence and worth.

Girls frequently accommodate their lack of space by withdrawing and creating their own cherished "girls' spaces" (*Listening to Girls*, 1992:8). Girls "are not inclined to compete with outsiders for public social space. Instead they create space for themselves within their subjective group culture" (Foley, 1993:2). *Listening to Girls* (1992:8) reports on the ways in which girls, from an unequal position, negotiate for space in schools:

> It can be a particular piece of lawn or yard, or a common room, classroom or library where behaviour is regulated by school staff. In both primary and secondary schools it is surprisingly common to find that the girls' toilets are used as girls' meeting places, a place to call their own. "It's the only place they can't get you", said one 13 year-old girl, echoing sentiments expressed time after time by many girls in many schools. When the levels of harassment in the school are high, the girls' toilets in many schools have become unsavoury sanctuaries, highly valued by some girls.

It is deplorable that for many girls, the toilets are the only "public" space which they feel safe to occupy. In one school, the girls ate their lunch in the toilets, rather than the playground. In relation to the curriculum, TMS is a particular kind of space created by neo-liberal reforms.

TMS is a space in which the norms of the themes just described are challenged. For girls to engage the curriculum equally with boys alters the dynamics of accommodation and negotiation, and makes the curriculum and the school setting itself, a site of both desire and threat for girls.

Transpositional mediating space: a site of desire and threat for girls

Girls' experiences of neo-liberal education reforms are a complex intermingling of both desire and threat, resulting from the patriarchal power relations of schooling, and their connection with the public-private dialectic in society. I would like to stress that this central argument concerning TMS is a phenomenon distinct from, although clearly related to, the issue of girls' experience of a paradigmatically male-centred overt curriculum (Rich, 1977:232; Gilligan, 1990:6), and distinct also from the "malestream" epistemological foundations of the curriculum (Martin, 1981a; O'Brien, 1984). First, I will discuss the complex notion of desire in girls' schooling.

Girls, desire and schooling/ Girls' desire of schooling

There has in Australia been a generally accepted, yet untested belief that girls are primarily preoccupied with romance, television soaps and so on, as a result of the social construction of gender and femininity, as in Gilbert and Taylor (1991:58), for

example. Yates (1993a:61) refers to this view, noting girls' difficulty in writing "resistant themes", and their continuing "fantasies that some day my prince will come". It is often assumed that all girls want is to settle down with a husband and have children. These desires are said to override the certain knowledge that the majority of girls will spend a large part of their lives in the paid workforce in some capacity. In this romance framework, girls are also popularly characterised as having low career aspirations, being bored with the subject of women and work, defeatist, and giving up easily on the workforce. Similarly, girls are depicted in a number of studies as "wallowing in false consciousness" and unable to take up the possibilities offered to them, because of their "apparently unitary inscription within the discourses of patriarchy" (Turnbull, 1993:102). In this regard, Turnbull is critical of the Gilbert and Taylor study's emphasis on girls' assumed preoccupations with romance fantasies. I agree with Turnbull's view. What is wrong is that the judgment of girls' desires as trivial, confused or contradictory, is abstracted from the context in which that judgment is made. The context is one in which the masculine is the norm, and girls' cultural pursuits are subordinated as lesser than boys', for example, football. It is also assumed that these are girls' only pursuits.

At the same time, it is undoubtedly true that girls do experience conflict between their perceived future roles in the paid workforce and in domestic responsibility (Foster,1984; Gilbert and Taylor,1991). Gilbert and Taylor state (1991:50), "at one level girls may appear to be preoccupied with romance and personal relationships, at another they are intellectually aware of trends in society and their likely futures". The conflict girls experience in trying to negotiate both public and private aspects of social life is a pivotal dimension of TMS. The notion of TMS also makes it possible to view girls' desires not so much as conflict and contradiction, but as a realistic and salient assessment that the requirement to traverse between private and public life is difficult for women.

Nevertheless, I would like to challenge the veracity of these assumptions about girls' orientation to schooling, of Gilbert and Taylor and others, pointing to four significant recent pieces of evidence. First, it has become very clear that for girls, learning and achievement are of paramount importance. The girls in the *Listening to Girls* study (1992:12) affirmed that

> learning is the raison d'etre of schooling and girls have very strong views about the quality of their learning experience. The quality of teaching is of paramount importance to *most* girls. They like to be *productive* in their learning (emphasis mine).

Second, a very detailed New South Wales study of girls' and boys' attitudes to single-sex and co-education (Regan, 1993:11) produced statistically significant findings that the girls enjoyed being in a single-sex class; they perceived that their work improved as a result, and that they were getting more chances to ask questions, getting more of the teacher's time and getting a better share of equipment in the classroom. They were very pleased to be working in a quieter, more relaxed and less competitive environment. They reported that they were pleased not to be disrupted by the boys and they did not feel as intimidated or as embarrassed as they felt in mixed-sex classes. An important conclusion to be

drawn from this study, is that eliminating the concern for the good order of the class allowed girls to take pleasure in their own, and others' learning.

Third, recent research by Percy (1993) indicates that girls are more endorsing of independence in women and concerned about their own learning than was previously thought to be the case. In a study of 484 fifteen to seventeen-year old girls' reading preferences, the author's hypothesis that girls prefer a central character who acts out a traditional social role was strongly rejected. Instead, it was found that the subjects of this study believed that female characters should be strong, attractive, independent and intelligent. A woman working outside of the home was definitely preferred as a central character to a "housewife", and satisfying endings were those that gave the central woman character what she wanted-- whether it be career, marriage, independence, or success (Percy, 1993:iv). Although these girls were very concerned with individual women's rights and autonomy, they were not at all interested in the women's movement, from either a political or a personal perspective. Their view of feminism is illustrative of a contemporary general disavowal by young women of feminism as a movement for the collective enhancement of all women's lives. This tendency indicates a need for curriculum change to address the connections between collective social relations and individual choices. To date, curriculum reform has emphasised the latter only, in encouraging girls to pursue male-dominated subject choices and occupations.

Fourth, and perhaps the most significant piece of evidence is the fact that in N.S.W. at least, girls' performance in higher level Maths and Science now equals or exceeds that of boys (although many fewer girls than boys actually study these subjects), and in the 1992 Higher School Certificate for the first time, girls outperformed boys in these subjects (MacCann, 1993). These findings are being interpreted as indicators that educational equality for girls has been attained. What these findings more importantly demonstrate is the desire and determination of girls (and in the case of male-dominated areas such as maths and science, *certain* more privileged girls specifically), to succeed at school, even in areas from which they have previously been excluded or poorly represented, because of the overwhelmingly masculine character of those areas, and their perception by girls as male domains (Fennema and Sherman, 1978; Sjoberg and Imsen, 1985). As John Mack put it, "girls are learning to play boys' games" (*S.M.H.*, 21/7/1993). Some women and girls have always shown a desire to achieve in male-dominated and male-defined areas, but that very achievement simultaneously constitutes a threat for them.

I would like to offer an interpretation of desire as it relates to girls' experiences of the curriculum and the school setting. The subject of women and desire is discussed variously in the literature. I will make brief reference to three very different theoretical interpretations of desire, before suggesting the potential usefulness of the concept for an understanding of girls' relationship with schooling.

The first interpretation of desire

The first interpretation, pointed to by Elizabeth Grosz (1989:xv), describes desire as a pivotal concept having two quite different intellectual traditions. The first tradition, which encompasses Plato, Hegel and Lacan, conceives of desire as a "fundamental lack in being, an incompletion or absence within the subject which the subject experiences as a disquieting loss, and which prompts it into the activity of seeking an appropriate object to fill the lack". Grosz notes that for Lacan, "desire is an ontological lack which ensures the separation of the subject from the immediacy of its natural and social environment, and the impulse of that subject to fill in this space through, in the first instance, the desire of the (m)other; and in the second, through its access to language and systems of meaning".

In the second tradition which Grosz (1989:xvi), sees as encompassing Spinoza, Nietzsche, Foucault and Deleuze, desire is conceived not as a lack but as a positive force of production and self-actualisation. In this second sense, at the level of the subject, desire functions insofar as the subject "desires the expansion or maximisation of its power... it is not an unactualised or latent potential; it is always active and real". Grosz notes that feminists have usually used the first notion of desire to explain women's position within patriarchy as the objects of men's desire; however, more recently she suggests, "a number have turned to the Nietzchean notion, which links desire directly and without mediation to power and resistance". Two theoretical notions related to this second sense are Irigaray's notion of feminine "jouissance" and Gallop's, and others', notion of "bad girls", (public lecture, University of Sydney, 21 June 1993; Foster, 1982). Both of these notions share a theoretical objective of validating a more agentic subjectivity for women.

The second interpretation of desire

The second interpretation of desire places it in the context of sexuality, and specifically "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich,1980). Young, (1993:33) following Spivak (1987:151), describes heterosexuality as a "set of material-ideological facts that constitute "women" cross-culturally. The material practices of enforced heterosexuality serialise women as objects of exchange and appropriation by men, with a consequent repression of autonomous active female desire". Young notes (1993:34) that these material practices are structured by a sexual division of labour, the most common being "the caring for babies and bodies, and not doing so". Feminist theory has elaborated the ways in which women collectively are constituted materially (for example, MacKinnon's work), ideologically (for example, Smith's work), and politically, (for example, Pateman's work). Much of this work has focused on the areas of sexuality, sexual violence and the sexual division of labour.

An unexplored question is how girls experience a curriculum which to date has not challenged these material and ideological practices. The view of girls as being preoccupied with romance fantasies and fictions shares features both of Grosz's first platonic sense of desire as lack, and of the second way of interpreting desire as maternal-sexual practices. Furthermore, the curriculum reinforces material-sexual practices which objectify girls. An example is the way in which the curriculum powerfully reinforces the injunction that caring work be done by female teachers and by girls themselves, and that the authority in schools be held by men. The

condoning of sex-based harassment in many schools, and the requirement for girls to accommodate it as a feature of the learning environment, are further examples.

The third interpretation of desire

The third interpretation is derived from poststructuralist thought and is exemplified in the work of Bronwyn Davies. Davies (1990:501) contends that "desires are constituted as central to each person's gendered identity and to the very maintenance of the gender order". She is concerned to work towards the "deconstruction of this conception of desire and of gender identity" through a "feminist deconstruction of the storylines, metaphors, images and practices through which we know who we are, come to quite different lived patterns of desire, patterns that no longer lock us into the "feminine" or the "masculine" but allow a movement amongst a multiplicity of ways of being". In this last notion of multiple ways of being, Davies is drawing on Kristeva's (1986:209) third "generation" of feminism, in which Kristeva puts forward the possibility of moving beyond the "male/female dualism". Davies (1990:503), following Kristeva, stresses that "desire is central to who any one person is, not in the sense of what we "really want" indicating who we "really are", but in the sense that in being discursively constituted in certain ways, it is the patterns of desire that we learn in that construction that will hold us there, despite any rational wish that this not be the case". Moving beyond the "male/female dualism" entails "the re-constitution of ourselves outside the mass of *woman*ness or *man*ness. We must look to the organisation of desire, not in terms of our assigned sex/gender, but in terms of the multiple possibilities that being a person opens up" (Davies, 1990:504). These ideas have parallels in transgender theories and Queer culture currently fashionable in the United States and Australia.

These three theoretical discussions of desire illustrate the enormous divergence that exists amongst theorists on this subject. For example, there is no meeting point between the second interpretation which emphasises a broad material and ideological social system in which men and women are very differently positioned, and the third interpretation which in positing the individual reconstitution of sex/gender, plays down altogether the systemic asymmetrical relations of men and women in the patriarchal society in which this reconstitution is to occur. This divergence also demonstrates the difficulty of attempting to clarify the nature of women's relationship with desire, and how desire functions in the lives of women.

A phenomenological approach to curriculum preempts a crucial question: *what desire(s) do girls actually experience in and of schooling*? Further, can the theoretical interpretations discussed above throw any light on this question?

In my view, there are very good reasons to believe that girls desire to learn, that they value their schooling and the learning environment. During the past decade in Australia, there is no doubt that this desire has been encouraged and nurtured by girls' education policies which have stressed the need for girls' greater achievement in male-dominated subjects, and girls have been happy to oblige. The latter comment is not made light-heartedly, nor is it meant to imply any criticism of girls. Rather, my view is that girls are caught up in conflicting educational discourses relating to desire, and that girls' own experiential relationship with

desire cannot be understood without the accompanying notion of threat. For this reason, it is far less clear *what* girls really desire from schools, and what a curriculum originating in girls' active subjectivity would look like.

The three theoretical interpretations of desire discussed above are useful in clarifying the philosophical foundations of recent Australian girls education policy. Discourse concerning the desirable educational achievements of girls has at different times philosophically encompassed both the senses of desire which Grosz has delineated. Earlier, girls were constructed as lacking the necessary masculine learner subjectivity as well as the necessary male-defined knowledge. The very meaning of "girl" included a negativity or lack (Jones, 1993:12). In this construction, the lack was to be removed by increasing girls' access to masculine knowledge areas, but not it transpired, their achievement relative to boys in those areas. This first platonic sense of desire as lack resonates with the philosophical and social construction of femininity as "other" to the masculine. Thus, it could be argued that for girls, the philosophical construction of desire in this first sense would have a logical consistency to which they could relate, given the normative climate of the school in relation to its curriculum, and its material-ideological practices.

The second sense of desire referred to by Grosz is, however, much more problematic for girls, because it invokes a more inherently masculine orientation to desire, that of actively seeking and pursuing achievement, and to an extent, power. To date, even more problematically for girls, that achievement has centred specifically on masculine curriculum areas and subject domains. Although the discourse of reform is couched philosophically in Grosz's first platonic sense, the implications for girls of following that discourse, as well as the outcomes, relate directly to Grosz's second sense of self-actualisation. In concrete terms, this has resulted in the perception that girls are interlopers in male educational terrain, depriving boys of their rights. The crucial point here then is that for girls to desire in this second sense places them not only in a contradictory position as "educated women", as Martin (1991) has pointed out, but also in a position of threat, which is both actual in school, and potential in relation to post-school life. It is significant that the what *about the boys!* movement emerged at the precise moment (and not a moment earlier) that girls were seen to be outstripping boys in the areas of male power and privilege. Prior to that, boys education was only an issue for feminists and educationists concerned with improving gender relations. This point is obvious if one asks whether there would have been such concern about boys and their schooling if the contested areas had been different. What if the newspapers had reported, "girls beating boys at childcare and home management!" No problem, I'd suggest.

As I mentioned earlier threat can be seen to occur on a spectrum of prohibition, through the use of different kinds and degrees of force and violence. TMS describes the kinds of prohibition which come into play for girls as they attempt to negotiate and resolve both the desire and threat, which for them are the characteristics of the learning environment. The *what about the boys!* backlash in Australia poses a potential threat to girls' desire for equal achievement in that environment.

Before discussing the nature of threat in more detail, a brief comment on the other two theoretical interpretations of desire is in order. A central part of my critique of reform policy is the way in which it has increasingly omitted or ignored the asymmetry of sex/gender relations which is integral to the second interpretation. That interpretation highlights the inherent consequent repression of autonomous, active female desire in patriarchal societies. In the third interpretation, on the other hand, this asymmetry has no relevance, and it is assumed that the process of reconstructing gender through an active and voluntary process of desire is assumed to be the same for males and females. In my view, this interpretation is based on an inadequate account of gender relations, and to a significant degree, is both voluntaristic and solipsistic. However, during 1993 and 1994, the poststructuralist approach to questions of gender and accompanying educational policy gained prominence in Australia, as elsewhere.

The nature of threat: its relationship to desire

The first construction of desire as lack, and girls as lacking masculine learner subjectivity, can be seen to pose no particular threat to hegemonic masculinity. In fact, it could be argued that the construction of girls as lacking in relation to hegemonic masculinity might have the effect of reinforcing that hegemony. It might further be argued that the earlier construction of girls as lacking essential knowledge in a paradigmatically masculine curriculum would have the effect of reinforcing that paradigm in the curriculum. I believe that until mid-1993 in Australia, that was the case.

However, in 1993 the construction of girls as lacking essential knowledge received two serious challenges. The first challenge came with a new context in which girls' performance in maths and science was beginning to draw level with, and in some subjects exceed, that of boys. The second challenge came with the proposed National Curriculum Profiles which promised modifications to some of the epistemological foundations of the maths and science curricula. These modifications in fact amounted for the first time to a partial, national "feminising" of the curriculum, in a way which had been undertaken to some extent, at the local level of curriculum innovation in individual states. A notable example is the work of the Victorian McClintock Collective (1989) in science curriculum. These proposed changes elicited hostile responses from a number of academics in the maths and science fields, who were highly concerned about the "watering down" of "real" science and maths as the result of broadening the curriculum to consider, for example, ethical issues, and to challenge the existing curriculum from the perspectives of girls and of indigenous Australian students.

The proposed changes to national curriculum would, for the first time, have constituted reform at the level of epistemology. Furthermore, such reform might have been expected to challenge fundamentally the relationship of girls with the curriculum, replacing a framework in which girls were viewed as inadequate, with one in which the most male-defined of curriculum areas were to be challenged from the standpoint of women as a collective population (Schuster and Van Dyne, 1984). The collective nature of this challenge would also have constituted a significant shift away from the existing situation of only a small group of more privileged girls achieving in male-defined curriculum areas.

Clearly, this epistemological shift promised to be an empowering and affirming one for girls (Schuster and Van Dyne, 1984). The important point in the context of this exploration of the desire and threat experienced by girls is that the first sense of desire (as lack), in which girls are seen as disadvantaged, is relatively safe for girls, posing no threat to hegemonic masculinity and possibly reinforcing it. On the other hand, however, the kind of epistemological consequence pointed to above would significantly change the nature of girls' desire for learning. This change would in effect have encouraged girls to relate to learning from a position of power and affirmation similar to that enjoyed by boys, and approximating more closely Grosz' second self-actualising sense of desire.

It is this second sense of desire in the educational setting which becomes threatening for girls and women. This is the sense which comes into play when women refuse to be constructed as lacking as in the first sense of desire and actively pursue their educational and occupational goals. The massacre at the University of Montreal demonstrated tragically the way in which women's desire to enter the field of engineering, in the general context of women at that university refusing sexual objectification and possible violation, proved to be a potent and provocative combination for the murderer.

Media depictions of girls as outperforming boys in male-dominated subjects have elicited some strong reactions. The statement, "Girls to the fore in HSC. maths" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20/7/1993) carries a very different message from the messages of the past decade that girls were "underachieving" in maths. In terms of TMS, theoretically it would follow that for girls to outperform boys may prove to be very threatening for girls. Indeed, the article cited above prompted a Letter to the Editor (S.Dando, 20 July, 1993) entitled, "How about the boys?", in which the writer comments, "Feminine superiority, not equality, in all subjects seems to be important in the 1990s", and asks, "What is the minister's and the board's agenda for boys?"

A number of questions are raised by the foregoing discussion of desire and threat in girls' schooling. For instance, what might happen if girls move outside the frame of their construction as lacking in relation to boys? How could girls be the caretakers of boys if they are equal (or better?) achievers? Such a prospect could be very threatening for girls and their education. For example, the current reaction to girls' perceived advances in maths and science may well make it very difficult for girls to pursue excellence in those subjects, if they are seen as depriving boys of their rights as the high achievers in those areas. The interesting question is also raised of whether, and to what extent, girls and women use caretaking as a means of controlling the threat against them which is posed by greater equality? Finally, given that the value-added dimensions (to use an economic rationalist concept) of care and caretaking are vastly different according to whether they are done by men or women, where does this leave care as a curriculum issue? This question is very pertinent in Australia where care-related matters have been relegated to the bottom of the curriculum hierarchy.

Certainly when women actively seek and occupy places on what is seen as male terrain, this can become life-threatening to them, as the Montreal massacre demonstrates. The mere existence of policies on girls education has begun to

provoke indignation about the harm they may do to boys' interests. These policies together with their success in terms of girls' improved participation and performance in specifically male-defined areas, have produced a subtle shift from the perspective of girls as lacking, into Grosz's second sense of desire, in which girls can be seen to be actively seeking educational success. It might be predicted, then, that this shift could prove in the near future to be a threatening one for girls. The rush to develop compensatory programs for boys are, I believe, the beginnings of a threatening response to girls and to policies concerning their education.

I would like to make some speculative suggestions concerning girls' experiences of desire and threat, as a dialectic which is a pivotal aspect of the TMS as it is experienced in their school lives. Some comments are also made about how girls may attempt to resolve the opposing forces created by this dialectic.

Desire and threat as dialectical experiences in girls' schooling

I have referred to my observations of girls' experience of schooling as "speculative", because while studies such as those of Samuel (1983) and Lees (1993) have provided insights into aspects of girls' relationships with school cultures, as yet there exists no comprehensive account of how girls engage and receive the curriculum and schooling generally. Some excellent beginnings to such an account were offered in the Australian research *Listening to Girls* but that study has not been given wide public dissemination. Although it has been taken up enthusiastically by some teachers, it seems unlikely that it will be used to inform broad curriculum change at the national level.

At various points in this paper, I have reiterated that education for women is both contradictory (Martin, 1991) and inasmuch as it entails movement into male terrain, potentially threatening and dangerous. Noting that it is not uncommon for women to experience male violence in connection with educational participation, Rockhill (1987:316) observes that "we know little about how it is lived in women's lives". Specifically discussing literacy, Rockhill (1987:315) notes that for many women, education is a means of becoming "somebody", and that it has functioned as a primary site of both "regulation and of rebellion". In the Australian context, some recent research reinforces these themes. Narelle Glass (1993), in a study of nurses who gained tertiary qualifications, found that these nurses believed they had a lot to risk if they continued to further their careers. The experience of hostility from their male partners, and the feeling that they risked losing their family relationships made them reluctant to pursue career advancement. Cheryl Hercus (1993:3) conducted a follow-up study of forty-five women who attended a weekend workshop on feminism. She found that "many of the women experienced subtle and not so subtle attempts to not only circumscribe their involvement in terms of active participation, but to prevent them from speaking of their experiences in feminist language".

I agree with Rockhill's observations of the inherent threat which is posed when women pursue an education; my specific interest is in the ways in which girls may experience and resolve for themselves the simultaneous desire to be "somebody" which education offers, and the potential threat to them from those who in turn

feel threatened by girls' living out of this desire. This last statement contains two important points: the mutuality of threat in the TMS, and the fact that this threat is itself the product of girls' desire for learning. This is not at all to suggest that girls themselves cause this threat or bring it upon themselves. My argument here is that both desire and threat are in turn produced by the neo-liberal equality framework, and that they form a dialectical relationship, in that framework. I am describing that relationship as dialectical because of the apparent opposing connotations of the notions of desire and threat, and because of the dynamic interplay of them in girls' schooling lives. I would wish to maintain that far from being unaware of the conflicting nature of these forces, girls are keenly aware of both, and of their dialectical influence on their schooling and its outcomes. It is this awareness that leads to girls' self-regulatory behaviour, for example, when speaking of male-dominated occupations, saying, "I agree with all of that, but I wouldn't want to do it myself" (Foster,1984:22), and more recently, removing the focus from themselves by asking, "what should we be doing to help boys to change?"

Drawing the themes together: between private and public spheres

This paper has outlined the construct TMS, which describes women's passage or movement between the private and public domains of contemporary social life, including schooling. TMS has been described as a space of concrete and psychic experience, created when women attempt to live the discourse of neo-liberal equality. It is a space which mediates between private and public spheres, and is contiguous with them. It can also be seen as a hidden, obscured and invisible area behind the discourse of equality, often surrounded by silence and censorship. This latter phenomenon is illustrated in education, for example, by the tendency to underplay the effects on girls' learning of hostile learning environments.

TMS is thus that experiential space between private and public spheres where women and girls are reminded, often harshly, that they are flouting the norms of the sexual contract (Pateman, 1988) when they enter this space. These norms have been described in terms of a number of themes. In relation to education, it has been argued that within neo-liberalism, these norms are contravened when girls and women express their desire to pursue equality with men in fuller senses, beyond the limited scope of their being the objects of "patriarchal sex-right" (Pateman, 1988:1) or domination.

TMS is contiguous with the merging that has occurred between the private and public spheres of social life, occasioned by women's movement into public life. However, it is in this mediating space of women's attempts to traverse the boundaries from private to public involvement, that women are reminded physically, bodily, sexually that they are women, that is, not-men. Naomi Wolf (1993:16) interestingly points to the significance of the increased pressures on women to be physically perfect, at a time of seemingly more equal rights for women. The prevalence of eating disorders, excessive dieting, and concerns about physical appearance in young women exemplify these pressures:

> As the economy, law, religion, sexual mores, education and culture were forcibly opened up to include women more fairly, a private reality colonised female

consciousness. By using ideas about "beauty", it reconstructed an alternative female world with its own laws, economy, religion, sexuality, education and culture, each element as repressive as any that had gone before.

Cognised in this way, "beauty" is one of the reminders of difference which constitute a significant part of the lived curriculum of girls' everyday experiences of schooling. Girls experience these reminders through the taken-for-granted practices of schooling, such as the injunction to be caretakers of the classroom learning environment, being treated as having secondary status as learners, and experiencing the most highly valued curriculum areas as not connecting with their experience, and as the rightful property of males. Thus, TMS is not merely a metaphor, but the place where girls' schooling experiences occur. It is not just characterised by contradictions and double binds. It is more profoundly the place where the asymmetry of gender is experienced by girls in schooling, as lived curriculum.

Girls in schools have the right to be given the fullest possible understanding of the organisation of public and private life, and its implications for their own lives, and the power and scope of their thinking. This understanding should be at the epistemological core of curriculum-making. The construct TMS offers a means of doing this. This account has much to offer curriculum development and pedagogical practice. Feminist theory has provided illuminating accounts of the conditions of women's lives, directed towards analysing the ways in which the often oppressive conditions of women's lives impinge on their physical, mental and emotional well-being. Phenomenological theory, with its emphasis on the dialectical relationship between subjective life and material conditions, strongly suggests the possibility of the opposite kind of influence: that subjective reality can affect and change objective conditions fundamentally. In effect, this process is well under way, exemplified by the changes wrought by consciousness-raising as the method of enquiring into "that mixture of thought and materiality" (MacKinnon, 1989:83) of the women's movement of the last two decades or so. The process is also exemplified by the rich theoretical literature which has supported those changes.

With the assistance of both feminist theory and phenomenological theory, it now becomes possible to envisage other, more positive, kinds of experiences for women through opening up the connections between subjective and objective realities, and making those connections more accessible and transparent. Such a notion sees women as the central subjects, the agents of action, rather than as the objects of intervention. This is a very different idea from that of false notions of empowerment, which have been questioned, justifiably, by Ellsworth (1989:92) as highly abstract and politically decontextualised. It is also a departure from notions derived from poststructuralism, such as Davies' (1993) suggestion of students reading and writing beyond the gendered dualism.

The methodology advocated here would assist girls actively to interrogate the nature of the masculine paradigm in the public and private aspects of their own immediate lives. This process would also help them to see ways to intervene to establish a space of better life possibilities. In practical terms, pedagogically this process may entail, for example, interrogating the curriculum for its

epistemologically masculinist assumptions; actively positing alternative epistemologies; developing methods of knowing and affirming their own subjective realities, whatever they may be; and strategies for improving the quality of gender relations in their own lives. What is needed is a curriculum which takes girls' various world-views as its starting-point, and validates those views by helping girls to express them. This method sees girls as active contributors to the process of curriculum-making. It sees knowledge, embodied in the curriculum, as having its origins in girls' lived experiences, as well as in boys'.

The elaboration of TMS reveals a potentially better space of experience for girls. It is a space in which it becomes possible for them to investigate and take greater command of their relationships with public and private life, and through the curriculum, to build positively and creatively on female difference. The next step is for us the theorists, researchers and curriculum-makers to take the lead from girls themselves.